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LETTERS

O N

LOVE, MARRIAGE, AND ADULTERY.

[PRICE TWO SHILLINGS AND SIX-PENCE.]

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L E T T E R S
O N
L O V E, M A R R I A G E,
A N D
A D U L T E R Y;

ADDRESSED TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
THE EARL OF EXETER.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. RIDGWAY, NO. 1, YORK STREET,
ST. JAMES'S SQUARE.

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1789.

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LETTERS.

LETTER I.

MY LORD,

THE name of CECIL, is respectable in the political and civil history of Britain : and you derive your honours and wealth from sources which should produce the noblest ambition ; that of improving the laws and political constitution of your country.

The private character of your lordship, I have often found a subject of praise : and in your taste for the arts ; particularly in your passion for music, you display the qualities of a munificent patron.

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The objects of patronage in a noble house, determine the principles of education through all its branches.

I will not wound your lordship's mind by minute and public references to a late event in your family; which I could trace to its general causes. I would only avail myself of it, to turn your lordship's attention to those causes, and engage your efforts to remove them.

Compare the possible consequences of such efforts, with those of your present pursuits. To dissipate the corroding reflections of royalty, by the commemoration of Handel; or to render music the means of supporting its professors—what objects for the ambition of a Cecil! while the constitution is mouldering into ruins; while the statute-books hold laws, which contaminate at the spring, all the happiness of domestic life!

The glorious revolution in France, hath stunned the English administration: for, in providing against the abuses of a free constitution, the patriots of France minutely delineate the actual government of England. This is sullenly, but secretly resented: for
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the national sympathy, with Gallic patriotism, is at this time so strong, that the minister, who would intimate an obstruction, or shew a disposition to take advantage of its distress, would be suspended at the treasury lamp, with the cordial approbation of the kingdom.

I do not call on you, my lord, to anticipate the necessity which I see approaching; a venal and perfidious administration.

I urge you not, on the state of parliamentary representation; on the corrupt influence of the India Company; on the accumulation of taxes to serve the purposes of jobbers; on the dreadful condition of the magistracy, the police, and the poor. It is hoped, the people of England will soon be instructed, in a mode of directing their representatives and their legislature on these subjects. I solicit your lordship to an undertaking less arduous; to remove those evils which have affected your peace, and clouded your hopes.

The common and statute laws, respecting love, marriage, and adultery, I will not specify at this time. Perhaps the fol-

lowing considerations may induce your lordship to examine, and to lay them before parliament for revival and amendment.

I have the honor to be,

My lord,

Your lordship's most obedient

And most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER II.

MY LORD,

THE principle of union between the sexes, has been variously denominated, and has been in esteem or disesteem, as it has appeared in a natural state, or perverted by customs and institutions. The ancients deified every considerable principle in human nature; and finding love to be highly powerful, they assigned it high distinctions, and prudently personified it by a feminine deity. Venus was not only a daughter of Jupiter, but a favourite, whose smiles overruled all things but the decrees of fate; who held in pleasing, because voluntary, thralldom all the inhabitants of heaven and earth. When we consider the reason or philosophy of this allegory, we wonder love became not the general principle of devotion. As the source of pleasures the most pure and extensive, what principle can bear its

its competition? Through what medium could men look up to nature, or the God of Nature, with gratitude so ardent, as that suggested by the numerous affections produced by love? But curses not blessings have been the general principles of religion. In rude and savage conditions, evils are so prevalent, that the birth of piety is generally under the dominion of a malignant fiend; and a base, abject spirit of devotion is generated, which improved knowledge or information cannot always expel. In the enlightened periods of Greece and Rome, the qualities commonly deified were mischievous. Jupiter, Neptune, Mars and Apollo, were formed from heroic or popular, not from virtuous or natural characters. Men having no view of becoming wise, no plan of becoming happy, have been conveniently furnished with deities whose qualities are alloyed, whose virtues are mingled with vices. Thus the father of gods and men, while he held the balance of the universe, animated or terrified all nature with ethereal fire; while all power, dominion, and virtue, were attributed to him, was transformed

transformed into a bull or a swan, for the conduct of a wretched intrigue. Pains have been taken by the advocates of antiquity to elevate these absurdities into probability and consistency. All the sources of parable, allegory and fable have been traced, to furnish favorable interpretations; and maxims of wisdom, or principles of virtue have been sought, where no ideas of them had been entertained. This is owing to a common error in our estimate and opinion of individuals or of nations. When we have obtained incidents and facts, we infer moral qualities and dispositions; on the idea of consistency. But the minds of men, and the constitutions of kingdoms, generally receive their principles from the hands of barbarism and folly. They afterwards acquire knowledge and virtue; but their habits being formed, they exhibit wise theories, and foolish or barbarous conduct; they are virtuous in avowed principles, and vicious in manners. We are thus perpetually embarrassed, with mingled qualities in morals, which would be unaccountable in speculation: and we see the same fountain

tain bring forth sweet waters and bitter. While we discern evident marks of poetical and even rational design in some parts of the heathen mythology; others may have been produced by gross superstition or vicious policy. Communities as well as individuals are formed on prejudices; they acquire portions of knowledge and virtue, which do not harmonize with their habits; we look in vain to them for consistency, and it is generally impracticable to argue from principles to actions, or from actions to principles.

The heathen mythology, in many of its parts, is not only absurd, unpoetical, and incapable of being rendered into sense, even by the licence of allegory and fable, but its effects must be vicious. The character of Jupiter, being the supreme religious model, the ambition of youth could not have been directed higher than to copy it; and they mingled acts of power and heroism with bad passions and mischievous actions.

Hardly any view of the political institutions of mankind can reflect greater dishonor on them, than that of their origin
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in vices of the most depraved character. When they have arisen from errors on the first principles of human nature, we find their first deities have been modifications of love; as it is the passion which holds the first rank in the human mind, or the blessing through which man must be most disposed to look up to nature with enthusiastic gratitude. The abuses of devotion, on this principle, generated voluptuousness, and mischiefs of various kinds ensued; but they were obvious and immediate corruptions of natural passions. In the mythologies of the world we are further removed from nature. Jehovah, Jupiter, or Jove, is arbitrary power; Mars, cruelty; Mercury, deceit. These are personifications of complicated ideas: they are corruptions of corruptions; and they were generated, not by mistakes in a state of simplicity, but by evil intentions and vices, in a condition of mature deliberation and malignity. However we may determine on these subjects, we are sure the interests of mankind have not been promoted when the principles which naturally and affectionately unite

the sexes, are made to yield precedence to those which raise us into heroes, enable us to lay waste the earth, or to deluge it with blood. Venus and Cupid, though admitted among the gods, or allowed to seduce them, are marked with circumstances of ridicule and reproach ; they seem not to be genuine or legitimate divinities ; and their influence is connived at or excused, not avowed as natural, necessary, or reasonable.

It has ever appeared as a rule, if natural dispositions be restrained and reproached, they become vicious ; as a man whose character is unjustly destroyed, becomes a villain, to assimilate himself with the order into which he is protruded. The disrepute of love, and its humiliating condition of subservience to passions of inferior utility and rank, sufficiently account for the inconveniences or evils it may have occasioned.

The elementary parts of the globe appear to have been disposed in regular laminæ or strata. Convulsions and eruptions have, in many places, destroyed this order. The wretched slave, who seeks the precious metals

metals in apparent ruins, would smile with incredulity, if an interval of serenity should allow him to smile, at being informed, that the riches he seeks for are not matters of hazard, but produced in a regular disposition of things; that such disposition is to be traced by persons of enlarged views and comprehensive knowledge. To such persons the order of nature is discernible, where it is inverted or confounded; where the heavier matters are brought to the surface, and the lighter sunk into the depth; where the laws of gravitation seem to have been rendered ineffectual, and things having no relation in weight, quality, or disposition, are brought together and intimately mingled. He refers every thing to its place; every particle to the bed wherein it was produced; and every deviation from general law to its cause.

It is thus in morality. Certain essential principles, like the constituent parts of the natural world, form its general utility; and these are the foundations of private and public virtue. But these, like the earth, are broken, distorted, or confused by customs

or institutions; and the subjects of our wretched governments, contemplate virtue under similar disadvantage, or seek happiness in the same random manner, as nature is viewed, or wealth sought, by the miserable slaves who pick up the fragments of disjointed rocks, or collect gold among the sands of a torrent. It is the philosopher who discovers the principles of nature through partial distortions, or amidst the confusion of human institutions: who, while customs or manners may make virtue vice, and vice virtue; or mingle dispositions and qualities so as to confound ordinary understandings, will point out the precise line between good and evil, and refer every principle to its proper origin. This is my meaning, when I allude to the principles and truths of nature, as distinguished from the facts furnished by society. The distinction is of importance to those, who would form a criterion of virtue and vice. We may observe those reasoners or philosophers who do not rise to the general tendencies or dispositions of nature, which, under the forms of permanent happiness or extensive utility,

actually govern the moral world ; who are confined to incidents in ill formed institutions, confound their understandings and those of their readers by multitudes of contradictory facts : and they conclude there are no truths or principles in nature, with as much sagacity or wisdom as men among rocks and precipices affirm that the general disposition of the globe is without order or beauty.

When you attend to my reason for explaining myself on this subject, your lordship will not imagine I detain you on uncertain or unimportant speculations. I refer to the only truths which are permanent ; and of utility as extensive as the combined interests of mankind. Nothing can be more uncertain, contradictory, or delusive than the events or facts produced by ill contrived, vicious, and fleeting societies. Every wise man, every philosophic moralist, acquires the faculty of looking through local institutions and customs, into the general principles which actuate mankind.

The genuine principle of love, producing genuine and permanent happiness — is
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not an idea merely speculative ; it is not a poetic fancy conceived to amuse or delude the multitude. It is an indisputable principle of nature, as obvious in its utility as any truth of natural philosophy.

It may be said, principles are of no use if not reduced to practice. If the real and obvious tendency of nature, in the union of man and woman, has not its effect, or cannot have it in the present condition of societies of what consequence can it be, to describe or to think of such tendency?

While we remain under the influence of vicious religions and bad laws, this objection may be urged against every principle of morality. It may be said, why talk of honesty, when it is not in the power of any man, in the present state of things, to be strictly or perfectly honest? In every office, occupation, or business, where the power or artifice of others, is to be managed ; it is as difficult, as directly against a man's immediate interest, to adhere invariably to that integrity which nature has constituted the cement of all advantageous intercourse.

tercourse or union, as it would be to proceed in love, on the maxims, to which alone God has annexed real and permanent happiness. But, as in every condition of trade or commerce, the admission of certain portions and of a general appearance of honesty, discovers a latent and fixed conviction of its necessity; so, in depraved conditions of society, the expedience of some degrees of tender inclination and the general affectation of it, discover the latent principles or operations of nature; and lead us to conclude that, in a better state of things, under better governments, religions and customs, the difficulties in our way to happiness would be removed, merely by the possibility of forming our determinations on the principles of reason.

When therefore, I attempt to delineate a state of nature, I do not seek the privilege of poetic licence. I consider myself, as more strictly and sacredly bound to truth, than in demonstrating mathematical propositions. Every thing that ought to be, may be, and will be; for all the truths of reason must have their effects.

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I will not deny, there may be species of facts against the probability of regulating the union of men and women, on natural or virtuous principles ; but I may allege other species of facts as numerous and respectable to prove such regulation practicable and necessary.

If the end of living be happiness—if the provisions of the deity, in the powers and principles of man, may and ought to make him useful—the facts producible to prove him always unhappy, when deviating from the path traced by reason, are better arguments for the possibility of following it, than any which may be deduced from vicious customs or manners, to prove the impossibility. But in this as in other cases, we are seldom so circumstanced, as to discern in their order, succession, and combination, those properties of the human frame ; the effects of which are as indisputable as those of gravitation.

Man and woman, are made for each other ; as evidently as one part of the globe, or as one part of the human body is made for the other. Either considered singly,

gly, does not constitute a perfect moral being; and in a state of separation, could not exist in circumstances of utility or enjoyment. The forms and dispositions of their bodies and minds, are proofs of this truth: for their characteristic qualities are different; and their defects are made up by their union. , Man and woman, in the plan of the universe, are divisions of a social being. Ancient poets borrowed the idea, probably from philosophical moralists; but they converted it, as poets usually convert a philosophical idea, into absurdity. They conceived Jupiter to have made man and woman one body; separated them, in some caprice, by a random precipitation into this world; and that wrong associations of separated parts, are the occasions of unhappy marriages.

But the principle is false. Men and women cannot be so effectually united; become virtually one, and mutually promote happiness, on any conceivable plan, where they are not formed and born separately, with dissimilar bodies and dissimilar minds. — It is the first provision of

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wisdom,

wisdom, in the road of happiness, to give connections the charm of choice: even where propensities are irresistible, it gives an idea of power or liberty, without which they would mortify, instead of delighting us.

I can only open the subject, in the present letter. I consider it as the most important in the province of morality or of legislation, and the most difficult of discussion in a perspicuous and useful manner. It has not been properly considered by philosophers; it has been misrepresented or abused by enthusiasts and fanatics; and rendered ludicrous or injurious by fabulists and poets. I mean to avoid these deviations and errors; and to submit to your Lordship, such thoughts or observations as may be useful to you, if you should attempt to induce the legislature to deliberate on the laws that effect love and marriage.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your lordship's most obedient,

And most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER.

LETTER III.

MY LORD,

THE sagacity and wisdom of Lord Bacon, have mistaken the subject under consideration; and the error of such a man, on a subject so important, should not be unnoticed, though treated with candor and respect. Undertakings of great extent and hazard, either in science or patriotism, are, in his opinion, suited to single men; not to those, whose time and affections are engrossed by the connections or duties of domestic life. Lord Bacon repeats the opinion, as a fixed or evident proposition; and in the language of advice to those who would be transmitted to posterity by the fame of their talents or actions. This is laying the axe at the root of a tree, which may be called most properly "the tree of life." If the first order of men is to be detached, to acquire immortality, love will

suffer in its credit; and be appropriated to the rank and merit of inferior beings.

I have profited so much by the wisdom and learning of Lord Bacon, that my mind retains an impression of his works, similar to early prepossessions in favor of the scriptures; and, I have superstitious feelings, like the consciousness of irreligious presumption, when I dispute his maxims. But his errors are fatal, as those of the oracles of religion; and, in the present case, they endanger important principles of social virtue. If his great and penetrating mind had considered the subject with attention, he would have perceived, that astonishing appearances and immortal characters are not the objects of genuine philosophy; never the produce of well formed or happy societies. They are "lights shining in dark places:" they are meteors in dreary or unhappy situations; they are monsters, giving examples of importance in bad societies; where the most useful members may seclude themselves with advantage, or be obliged to produce good out of evil. In societies wisely formed and honorably

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conducted, no wonderful characters arise; as in cultivated or enlightened periods, no miracles are ever performed. Such communities might be wonderful, compared with others; but the members would be lost to general view, each being aptly fixed to a particular station. This would be disadvantageous only in appearance; for a man who contributes his utmost proportion to the general prosperity, multiplies his enjoyments by general sympathies with every part of the community, and his gratifications are greatly superior to those of vanity in science or in war. In the same manner, men in affectionate union with women, becoming social beings, fulfilling their duties in the community, and feeling the prosperity and happiness diffused through all its parts, have satisfactions of much greater value and permanence, than any which can be enjoyed by detached or distinguished beings, however brilliant their fortune or fame. Socrates owes his immortality to a bad wife, to a corrupt community, to unequal laws, to the despotism of usurpers, and to an unjust or violent

violent death. No man formed for his duties, and understanding their effects, would wish to purchase the immortality at the price. His fate is a lesson, to societies, rather than to individuals. If Athens had been virtuous, Socrates would not have been immortal: but instead of the fame, of which he had no enjoyment, he might have spent every hour of a long life, in the pleasing consciousness of virtuous utility; instead of amusing himself with shadows, he would have felt and enjoyed substantial satisfaction.

Lord Bacon, in his own life, illustrates the truth under consideration; and furnishes means to destroy his maxim. His talents and progress had been checked, as a member of society; he had tarnished his character, before he quitted his public station; and he sought immortality in science, as a compensation for disappointment in life.

His opinion, therefore, can have but little weight in the present case: it is not grounded on a just view of the principles of society.

ciety ; and is owing to misapprehensions of the nature and happiness of man.

That society and not solitude is the state of nature, appears from the general provision, that all beings, capable of enjoyment or happiness, should be male and female ; each sex separately imperfect, and under a species of necessity of being united. I call it a species of necessity ; because the idea of choice ; and that undefinable faculty of nature, by which she renders her indirect operations our own acts and our own pleasures ; give us the first privilege of being, and are the first processes by which she converts into blessings, necessary or unavoidable effects. Though men and women must unite to form social beings ; they are brought together, as if they might unite, or live separately. This gives the idea of choice or liberty ; it distinguishes the impulses or actions of men from the motions of trees or stones ; it throws a charm over strong and absolute tendencies ; and forms an interest, where we implicitly or passively obey. This power of determination, combines the ideas of liberty

liberty and necessity, which polemic philosophers have attempted to disunite: ideas associated in nature; though sometimes in a manner, which may be better felt than described.

Poetry has ever abounded with misapprehensions or errors; and it is among the principal misfortunes of mankind, that its early lessons are furnished by poetry. The utmost licence has been taken in imagining the original state of man. Jupiter has been supposed to prevent the possibility of error by pairing and uniting the parties, to render them inseparable. Such an act of divine power, would have insured their misery. This is rendered probable; by the effects of every species of interposition in negotiations of love. We perceive certain mischiefs or injuries arising, in proportion as liberty is violated. And if we could suppose a Deity to be employed in selecting and uniting suitable persons through all the world, we may be assured, not one pair would have a chance for happiness.

It is the idea of choice; it is the power
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of rendering an event our own act, while our concurrence may be inevitable: these are the circumstances which constitute us agents, give us the opinion of being rational, and bestow all our blessings. In the business before us, as in all moral situations, it is puerile, to recur in imagination to a former and better state of human nature, producing happiness by direct or absolute necessity. No such effect could have been produced by such a cause. The state of the world may never have been better, on the whole, than at this time; it was never, probably, very different: and the quantity of good and evil in it, though fluctuating in human fancies, may possibly be invariable.

The determinations of nature are always effectual, but events in the moral world do not appear to be produced with the precision or accuracy we observe in the arrangement of inanimate objects. To introduce intellectual happiness, a certain latitude is admitted, and rational beings are so formed, as to assume the appearance of voluntary or independent agency. Hence the wonderful property of the human mind,

called conscience, the test of its operations, the legal representative of its power, and the final judge of its punishments and rewards.

The reason that perfect happiness does not take place, by a proper union of men and women, or by a proper conduct to each other, is similar to the reasons preventing moral happiness, in all cases depending on the will or conduct of moral agents. Having a choice, and acquiring judgment by errors, the consequence must be a condition of mingled happiness and misery.

The union of man and woman, though it be the necessary effect of their formation; though insured by affectionate tendencies or affinities; the necessity admits of consideration or choice, and it is made the determination or act of the parties. The suitability or unsuitableness of one to the other, and the various circumstances forming inclination or passion, must depend ultimately on their judgment or understanding. If we suppose a state of things, in which young persons are judiciously educated, and professedly prepared by their
parents

parents for this important event of social life, hardly any improper connections can be made, and more than poets have imagined of conjugal happiness must be enjoyed; for I am afraid, no man has had it in his power to conceive, the degree of happiness it is possible to enjoy in virtuous societies by means of virtuous education, and by the union of sensible and affectionate youth, educated for their principal duties. In this case, the object of the society would be the happiness of its members; and institutions of that tendency would be few, important, and obviously beneficial. Parents would be under a species of necessity in accommodating themselves to the general object; and education would be lessons of intelligence, truth, honor, fidelity, and goodness: they would perceive the inutility of interposing their power in the first connections of youth, where that of a Deity would be injurious despotism. The union of man and woman, having nothing to distinguish it from the union of stones and rubbish but choice; and marriage being the first and most important occasion of reducing

into practice the lessons of reason and virtue received in education, parents should be censured and subject to public restraint, in attempting to extend their authority where it cannot be usefully exercised. But it is the misfortune of ignorant or vicious parents, to neglect their duty in its proper place, and to commit injuries or outrages in attempting to atone for their errors. They who have given their children, or procured for them, trifling, ostentatious, or bad instructions, have reasons for suspecting their judgments or their hearts, in the choice of connections for life. But at such a period, it must be too late to remedy the evils of education, if such parents were susceptible of the intention. They interpose their authority, and having been unnatural or cruel in neglecting the season of cherishing the tendencies to reason and virtue, they think themselves justified in outraging nature, by denying their children privileges, which indeed they are not qualified to use; but which cannot be substituted by parental despotism, prudence, or avarice.

A man, who, by negligence, continues
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the infancy of his offspring beyond its natural period; or by vicious measures, contaminates and injures their minds, should be gratified with that exercise of despotism; and not relentlessly pursue them, where they must produce either good or evil for themselves, where their chance of recovery must be, by getting clear of the original author of their misfortunes.

In moral life, as in every part of nature with which we are acquainted, there are seasons. Ages elapsed in the progress of societies, before men discerned those of the year, and precisely distinguished seed-time from harvest. Great confusion and misery must have arisen: the season of cultivating the earth and depositing the seed being neglected, they endeavored to remedy their misconduct by industry misapplied in the period when the fruits should have been growing, and the harvest commenced. Whole tribes, provinces, and nations, either led wretched lives, uncertain of scanty support, rendered calamitous by diseases from unwholesome food, or they were starved. Ages of misfortunes fixed their attention to the

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the lessons of experience, and gave them probability of subsistence, by teaching them to discern the laws of nature, to distinguish the seasons of the year, or to employ in every period the species of industry particularly suited to it.

The duties or obligations of social life are, in a similar manner, strictly and absolutely confined to their seasons. Infancy is the spring, the season for giving impressions or forming dispositions. Youth the summer, in which they send out shoots, buds, and flowers. Manhood, the autumn. Old age, the winter. If, in common life, a succession of ages must have taken place, before misery instructed men in the importance of distinguishing the common seasons, though their support or existence depended on them—are we to wonder that, in moral life, the region of reflection and reason, the sufferings of the mind and heart have not yet instructed them to discern its periods or seasons? This knowledge requires the art of attending to a series of circumstances, and of reasoning on them; an art which is not easily taught even by misery.—

fery.—If Ceres and Triptolemus have been recorded and worshiped, for rescuing nations from the condition of brutes in respect to subsistence or support ; what would he deserve who could fix the attention of mankind on the moral seasons, by the observance of which alone genuine happiness can be procured? As those who neglect the timely cultivation of the earth, and sow in summer or in autumn, will be disappointed, poor, and starved ; those who neglect or corrupt their children, depending on future opportunities of correcting or improving them, will assuredly be disappointed and wretched. This ignorance of the nature of infancy or youth, or of the species of care to be employed on them, renders men incapable of forming the most important connections of society with any probability of happiness. The first remove from barbarism and brutal negligence, is into indiscriminate injudicious care, such as may be evident at this time in the anxieties of domestic education. Prudence is overstrained ; children are prepared for enterprises or duties merely possible, and left

to act at random, or wholly under the direction of others, on their entrance into society, and on assuming the characters they are to sustain. The lowest state of barbarism, is indicated by unfeeling negligence, similar to that of brutes, from whom barbarians are barely removed. The common transition is into the extreme of excessive care, by which all duties, all arts, all sciences are precipitated into the mind. The industry of parents and tutors should be employed to form habits of enquiry, discernment, and firm integrity; to cultivate a natural and exquisite sensibility; to form out of it an upright conscience; and to clear the springs of virtuous and happy dispositions. Youth thus educated would not surprize the ignorant by premature acquisitions; but placed in any situations, their errors would not be material; their minds and hearts, being in a right direction, they would answer the purposes of life in their proper seasons, and their progress in knowledge and virtue would be gradual and sure.

It is owing either to negligence or to excessive

cessive care in the education of children, and to despotism in the disposal of them, that so many unhappy marriages take place; and that youth are introduced in society or assume the rank of citizens, with no rational and social prospect, or with that of misery.— Previous to any reasonable expectation, that men and women may be generally united for happiness, the revolutions of the world must form societies for the advantage of all their members, morality must descend from speculation into life, and consist in duties, not in doctrines; education must be an exercise for those duties, or an apprenticeship for the business of living:—then we may see youth select each other with warm, lively, intelligent passions; and so happily associated, as to rescue Nature from blame, on the subject of marriage.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your most obedient

And most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER IV.

[MY LORD,

IT has not been my intention, to consider the unreasonable exercise of parental authority, as the first occasion of unhappy marriages in point of time. My sentiments arose, from the liberty or choice, essentially necessary to the happy union of man and woman. The improper authority of relations or parents, might not be the first cause, in point of time, if any probable origin could be assigned to mankind. Societies have risen to civilization and reason, by slow gradations, and from conditions bordering on brutality. The vice of brutes, or of men resembling them, is not tyranny but negligence, respecting their children. Their power is exercised over the females; and from causes, obvious in nature, though adapted to other effects.

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In societies of rude construction, men and women are induced to unite, by a combination of physical and moral causes, which are not easily described, because not easily comprehended. The effect of this combination is called instinct, passion, or affection; according to the rank or excellence of the animal, in which it appears: and not being understood in its principles, it is considered as an occult quality, or a mysterious gift of heaven. This may suit poetic, or superstitious ignorance; and furnish that enthusiasm in poems or religions, of which ignorance is generally the parent: but it will not answer the ends of real philosophy; or of those men, who find happiness, when they have investigated truth. We must be satisfied with the best use to which we can apply the mystic terms adopted by credulity; and say, that youth, abandoned by their parents in rude and wandering societies, were induced to unite by that degree of intelligence, called instinct; and the consequences of such union, are obvious.

When the principles, obligations, and

ends of social connections, are not understood; the provisions of nature may be perverted in their effects. Men and women are differently formed, that by moral necessity, or indispensable convenience, or the view of mutual happiness, they might be united. In conditions, little above brutality, this is not understood. Mechanic tendencies, and detached thoughts, produce brutal instinct; and they are united by its impulse. The bodily strength, vigor, and activity of the man; uninterrupted health; fortitude; courage; and force of intellect—instead of being, as in nature, advantageously contrasted to the soft and delicate construction of the woman; the frequent interruptions of her health; her timidity, tenderness, sensibility, and the exquisite nature of her intellect: this beauty or utility in the formation of male and female is lost. In all cases, extensive and clear knowledge, seem necessary to perfect virtue. Ignorance produces misery; misery obliges us to attend and observe; experience produces knowledge; and knowledge virtue.

This is the order of nature; and attempts

to violate, or anticipate its arrangements, are not attended with real or lasting advantages. The first state, is that of ignorance; which becomes that of error and misery. In the various nations discovered by curiosity or avarice, we have various specimens of the virtues and vices of human nature; for we find men, in gradations from brutality to considerable knowledge and civilization. I know no circumstance by which this gradation may be marked with so much accuracy and justice, as the treatment of women. It may be denominated the moral thermometer; and applied to societies with the certainty of important information.

In some parts of America, nations are pointed out, whose bonds of social union are slight and scarcely perceptible; they have no fixed settlements; they move in herds, like brutes; and nearly for the same reasons. This state of ignorance, exhibits hardly any thing but errors and miseries. The man, finding himself in possession of superior strength, and not having habits of reflection, he considers it as a title to dominion; and instead of protecting or succouring

couring female weakness; instead of producing happiness by the affection, tenderness, and domestic attention of the woman, he enslaves, or sets her just above a beast of burthen.

This error is common to the first efforts of uncultivated minds. If we attend to the morals of public schools, which those who preside in them treat as of less importance than the acquisition of languages, we shall perceive the dawn of society, as it opens among savages. All distinctions in schools, as societies, are created by bodily strength, courage, and cunning: the boy who has the misfortune to be weak, carries burthens; performs offices of labor; and is an oppressed, abject slave. It is thus in the allocations of savages. The men endowed with strength; and designed for offices requiring labor; by using that strength to terrify the women, transfer to them the laborious duties, and reserve themselves for exercises, which gratify or amuse. The life of a savage is divided by indolent repose, hunting, and war; while the cultivation of the ground, procuring fuel, and

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preparing provisions, are forced on the woman, and added to the necessary and burthenfome duties of bearing and nurfing children. It is difficult to imagine any thing more wretched than this ftate of the female fex; and the poffibility of its fufstaining fo much fatigue, or difcharging fuch laborious offices, would be doubted or difbelieved, if the proofs were not indisputable. We are to confider each female favage, without the affiftance of mechanifm, and with the moft wretched implements, performing daily the offices of gardener, farmer, butcher, baker, and brewer; her lord and mafter basking in the fun, feeking brutal intoxication, or purfuing barbarous amufement. In thefe fituations, the purpofes of creating male and female, feem to be nearly loft. The fpecies is continued; but man and woman is divided by the circumftances which fhould unite them. Thefe circumftances are underftood only in a fucceffion of generations, and by the inftructions of mifery: for nothing can be more miferable, than a ftate of brutal tyranny, oppreffing weakness; where every fatisfaction,

faction, every peculiar convenience arising from a natural union, are lost to all parties; where the partial, perverse gratification of one sex, is purchased at a price so great, so horrible, as the perpetual slavery of the other. The loss of the man, is that of every thing truly valuable and pleasing. The first bond of society, being wretchedly formed, the relations or duties arising from it; and succeeding institutions, either civil or sacred, must be unsatisfactory in their effects. The heart, perverted in its first and most important attachment, becomes incapable of any virtue, or of any natural and real pleasure. The savage, proud of domestic authority and absolute in his commands; the lives of his women and children in his power, because he has strength to punish, or to murder them—is a gloomy, solitary, miserable being; with no passions, or affections, distinguishing him from a lion or a bear; destitute of the privileges of humanity, those reflected pleasures arising from social connections: and his wife, or his woman, his slave, his beast of burthen, is nearly lost to all the purposes for which she

she is adapted. From being his associate; naturally and literally the moiety of himself; whose peculiar properties are necessary to render him a perfect being;—she is reduced into a condition beneath any to which a brute can be reduced: for there is not any species of avarice or cruelty which has perverted the nature and enjoyment of brutes, or rendered them so compleatly wretched, as men have rendered women. Incessant fatigue, from the accumulation of all the laborious duties, operating on bodies naturally delicate and variable in their health, their countenances wear a constant and melancholy despair; they are weary of life, often get rid of it by violence; and generally murder their female children, to prevent their becoming wretched as their mothers.

This is not an imaginary state of society: it is described by voyagers and travellers, who cannot be suspected of designs to philosophize; and having no purpose to serve, they cannot be supposed to falsify. It is probably the first state of human society; approaching nearly to that of brutes. For

however amusing to fabulists, poets, and children, to suppose the first, a golden age, because all beings are imagined to proceed from the hands of God in a state of perfection; all such suppositions are dreams; they contradict experience, and all we know of the laws of nature in the moral world; where things proceed from bad to better; where misery fixes the attention, which produces experience, which produces knowledge, virtue and happiness.

It was the misery of the first condition of every community; which poets may call the golden age, but which philosophers would rather denominate brutal;—that induced men to study and improve the principles of society. But while they avoided some of the obvious inconveniences of their first situations, they carried many secret and mischievous principles into those they improved. Community of goods; and community of women, who were included in the original chattels,—having been attended with inconveniences; claims of property were established; and every family became
a state,

a state, within a larger, associated for convenience and security.

This seems to be the second gradation of society, according to the observations of those who have taken extensive views of the social chain. In Europe, the succession of constitutional revolutions has been slow; history does not carry its enumerations to very early periods; or it is doubtful in its informations. In the traditions and fables of the ancients, some hints may be perceived to our purpose; perhaps the more to be depended upon, as not designed for such use. But the revolutions occasioned by wars, and the rapid though unequal progress of society by colonies, render them flight and indistinct. The information of ancient history and ancient literature is, however, sufficient to mark the general gradations from savage brutality, to Athenian civilization and humanity. Society shook off its vices and imperfections, until it produced the Athenian commonwealth.

As improvements were made, women were gradually emancipated. But in Athens, they had not reached their natural condition; and that circumstance alone, cannot

leave a doubt, that the commonwealth of Athens had essential defects! In the Roman history, we may more clearly trace the progress of a single society: and may observe, the character and treatment of women vary, with the variations of the state; from being chattels or property, stolen from the Sabines and converted to use, whether pleased or not, they gradually acquired rights, until in the Augustan age, they became the friends and companions of the most enlightened men in the world.

The effects of the dissolution or destruction of the empire, were like those of hurricanes: numerous societies were formed on the principles called feudal; which have been lately subjects of disquisitions with very solemn affectation of learning: they are obviously the principles, on which all banditti and all pirates, have fixed establishments, where they have not depopulated their conquests. The captain of the predatory gang became king; claimed the land and property seized; and divided them among his favorites or lords, on conditions of future services.

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The Gothic history is dark and gloomy as the spirit of its government: and it may not be practicable to assign the reasons, of the different conditions of women in the same periods, during the prevalence of the spirit of chivalry. The common people, male and female, were slaves under every species of the feudal government; and slavery is unfavorable to the principles on which the union of men and women should be formed; as it is to all the rights of human nature. Women felt doubly from the oppressions generated by a vicious government; for slaves revenge on those in their power, the injuries received from their masters; they seek a barbarous consolation by becoming tyrants in their turn. The general condition of women, therefore, was that of extreme wretchedness, in the ages immediately succeeding the demolition of the Roman empire. But the adoration, at the same time, paid to beauty; the arduous enterprizes, and astonishing exploits, to obtain the slightest attentions from the fair; and the origin of chivalry, in periods of general

general barbarism and slavery, is curious and interesting.

All females, in the feudal states, constituted a species of property, and were disposed of, at the will of the father, of the baron or lord of the manor, or of the king. A system so oppressive and iniquitous, was fruitful of enormities. All choice being precluded, intrigues or stratagems were formed; and in barbarous times, all steps were taken in blood. Women of rank, though only chattels; were, for reasons easily imagined, the most precious of all property; and the principal objects of the spirit of depredation or warfare which actuated the times. Immured in castles, and attending with solicitude to every thing conducive to beauty, their natural softness and charms, were heightened by timidity arising from their situation. Hence the astonishing contrast between the barbarism and brutality of the men, and the beauty and delicacy of the women; hence the extravagant strains of rapture and adoration, with which love inspired rude, sanguine and vigorous imaginations; and hence the spirit of knight-errantry, principally occasioned by female sufferings

ferings and charms.—All evils will produce remedies ; and knight-errantry was the effect of numerous or complicated miseries, occasioned by the feudal institutions. These miseries being sensibly felt, in the dearest of all property, the fair sex ; the knights were peculiarly devoted to the ladies, and the object of their valor was to redress female injuries. The fortunes of the knights generally depended on their talents ; and talents were nearly confined to them. They proceeded on the motives, attributed by the ancients to Hercules ; they roved through the world to rid it of monsters. The giants and dragons recorded in the romances of those times, were formed by imaginations accustomed to the violences of barbarous lords ; who, like brutes, made war on each other for beauty ; and who carried off women, as the most valuable articles of booty. The muses are generally in the interests of humanity ; but they are always tinged with the spirit of the times. In the old romances, women are spoken of as deities ; and their champions as prodigies. But this elevation of the sex, is unnatural and extravagant ;

extravagant ; and temporary adoration will not atone for continual apprehension ; or for the deprivation of that liberty and choice which are the charms of every affectionate union.

I am aware of the prepossessions of women, and those of the devotees of love among men, in favor of romantic principles or manners. Modern gallantry, particularly that of a neighbouring nation, is owing to some remaining sparks of the ancient flame of chivalry. That brilliant flame was occasioned by a multitude of enormities and miseries ; but it is not suited to those general principles of attachment which render men and women happy.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's,

Most obedient,

And most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER V.

MY LORD,

THE history of the passions is curious and important. They undergo rapid revolutions; and to understand their various appearances, we must study the civil and religious constitutions which have influenced their direction.

Practical politicians, are almost necessarily superficial; finding every thing in the spheres of courts, flexible to power, they encourage the opinion, that right and wrong, virtue and vice, are convertible terms, and depend on the caprice, folly, or vices which usually fabricate the constitutions of states. Writers assuming philosophical distinctions, have adopted the opinion; and because good is put for evil and evil for good, they deny their difference, unless it be formed by the laws or customs of nations, If there were

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not principles and dispositions in nature, generally determining the boundaries of right and wrong, advantageous or disadvantageous; as they do those of pleasure and pain, light and shadow: if they depend wholly on the passions and interests of particular societies—nothing analogous to justice could take place in the reciprocal transactions of communities; for nothing like a standard could be instituted by intellectual calculations; and the world must be a scene of licensed rapine and iniquity. There is a rude similitude in the original construction of societies, which indicates uniformity in the first suggestions of nature concerning right and wrong; and notwithstanding the variations of partial interests, or of advantages misunderstood, mens' ideas of virtue and vice in all great or essential matters, are universally similar.

When we enquire into the effects of particular principles, it may be useful to look into its history; to consider the appearances it assumed under various circumstances; and to estimate the influence of opinions, prejudices, and vicious institutions, in checking the

the tendencies of nature to produce wisdom and happiness. It is in this manner, we discover truth; separate the operations of nature from the sophistications of art; and obtain permanent rules of duty. In this way we gradually rise above fervility to prepossessions, remove embarrassing error, and clear the road to happiness.

In this manner, we have treated the subject of love; the most important principle in human nature, and attended with difficulties in proportion to that importance.

Nothing marks the sentiments of modern nations, or the doctrines of modern morality, with stronger characters of barbarism, than the prevailing apprehensions of love. Instead of assigning it, in our systems, the first rank, as it really holds in nature; we consider it as the occasion of restraint or prohibition; and convert into vice, into a source of poignant misery, the first virtue and blessing of man. We may perceive some of the reasons, in the short history of this principle, given in the last letter. Its extravagance in the periods of chivalry, was a pretence for moralists to pronounce it

reprehensible. But the source of the evil is higher. An order of men arose, in the dark ages immediately succeeding the dissolution of the Roman empire, which, though not unknown, had never been suspected of aiming at the dominion of the world.

Priests, of all mythologies, had been the instruments of power. The oracles of Greece, and the auguries of Rome, had been directed by the ruling administration, party, or individual; and it had been invariably the object of prudent ambition, to possess the priests with proper inspirations, to direct the omens of the augur, or to teach the sacred chicken the mode of picking up their food. The general conditions of subsistence and preferment, in all sacred orders, necessarily impress a species of interested fervor, which has unquestionably been the character of the priesthood, though not of individual priests. Power always fostered this instrument of its views, until priests felt the reins of empire in their hands; and success rendering timidity insolent, they kicked

off the crowns of emperors, or made kings attend them as their slaves. — How these events were produced, is not our present enquiry. We may, however, hint a general and probable reason, in the revival and abuse of the doctrine of immortality. The reasoning of Socrates; the eloquence of Plato; the seducing charms of poetry in Homer and Virgil, affected only the higher orders of understandings, in cultivated or enlightened periods. In the times of Gothic darkness, under consideration, by an enthusiasm and eloquence suited to the times, and uniformly subservient to interest or ambition; the doctrine of immortality, with its allurements or terrors, reached the remote cottage, and subjected the the wretched slave, as well as his despotic master, to clerical contribution. Ecclesiastics discovered, what Archimedes wished for, a world to stand upon, in order to move this at pleasure. The attention of men was directed to that world, conceived to be at the disposal of priests. An order, sustained by finesse or intrigue, discerned its advantage; and artfully trafficked the promises

promises or immunities of heaven, for the honors and riches of the earth. Hence the dominion of ecclesiastics! Hence the numerous arts of composition for immoralities! And, hence the object of our present enquiry, the discredit of natural or virtuous principles! It could not escape a politic and powerful profession, that various modes of commanding the general property, would arise without violence, from an opinion of criminality, in ardent and powerful passions. Natural and necessary enjoyments were therefore checked or prohibited, as inconsistent with the expectations of heaven. These prohibitions, however, might be suspended, and offences atoned, on conditions advantageous to clerical interest or power.

Love, a necessary and irresistible passion, became the first object of this holy taxation. Every natural disposition to it, all its suggestions, or effects, were crimes against an imagined purity; to be forgiven or permitted only on conditions lucrative to the church; where the keys of heaven were deposited; and where indulgencies were purchased for all the extravagancies of debauchery,

bauchery. Here is the source of that disagreement, which has long subsisted between the natural inclinations of man, and the doctrines of an artificial religion, to which government, education, and custom have given authority. And, recollecting the observations we have made on the spirit of chivalry, we shall understand the reason, that principles and manners, sustained a species of discordant opposition, which is connived at or licensed. In our morality, or religion, love is a crime, folly, or weakness; in our manners, love or its substitute gallantry, for we are not much acquainted with the principle itself, is the highest and most engaging accomplishment. We easily trace this opposition into the remains of that romantic spirit cherished by chivalry, and the severity or restraint imposed by interested superstition: and it has been attended with various effects, as chearful or gloomy influences have occasionally prevailed. The appearance of order or disorder, in public manners, have generally depended on that occasional prevalence. When superstition or fanaticism can frighten profligacy into constrained

constrained order or affected decency; an apparent disposition to virtue is assumed. But the operations of passions are not lasting. Libertinism rallies its powers; laughs superstition out of credit; and restores the triumph of debauchery. Modern nations, in this respect, are marked with fluctuating characters, according to the fluctuation of these causes. The constitution of a particular government may render its people ostentatious; stimulate their ambition, or regulate their manners, by a false sentiment of honor. Here superstition will be confined to the ignorant, the poor and the oppressed; and the prevailing manners will be attractive and ostentatious. Gallantry will be the character, of such a nation, so far as it relates to love.

Another government may, in its forms, approach nearer to nature, or to those principles which are the result of scientific investigation. Such an institution will profess to excite ambition and regulate manners, partly by a similar species of honor, partly by superstition under the name of religion, and partly by virtuous principles. Compared

pared with the effects of the former government, the general manners may be less inclined to gallantry, and influenced by principles of more permanent utility. The former would provide the region for youthful dissipation; the latter might afford a better chance to those who would render their first and strongest passions, the means of happiness for life.

To judge of these opinions, we should recollect, that nations retaining the military spirit which distinguished the times of chivalry, retain some things similar to the manners in romances, and are distinguished by, what we call, gallantry. Other nations, who had originally taken more popular forms, as they gradually become monarchical, military and superstitious, lose the first portions of rough sincerity, and assume, in the treatment of the fair sex, the language and manners of gallantry.

In modern nations, gallantry is the substitute of love; for it is the general agent which effects voluntary connections: Marriages, by authority, interest, avarice, or the grosser passions, have hardly any
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thing to distinguish them from those effected by the same means in all ages ; and having no relation to love, we must not refer to it, any of the connections they occasion. The tendencies or inclinations of nature, when restrained by the institutions of men, are to be found in their customs, or their vices. Modern governments having employed their utmost art, in preventing marriage from choice and affection, or in discrediting the passion of love as the bond of domestic union ; like a torrent violently impeded, it has burst its way in other directions : being denied its influence in bringing men and women together for happiness, it puts on the masque of gallantry, and brings them together for pleasure.

In modern language, there is an important difference between pleasure and happiness. Happiness is generally referred to Utopia, or the Mileenium : and pleasure is not, as in nature, an ingredient or portion of happiness ; but a detached sensation, either bodily or mental ; without attention to its causes or consequences. This deserves the serious attention of your Lordship ; as
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modern manners are influenced by the error; and it is supported by the abilities of philosophers, who are popular, because they denominate the principle of morality either sentiment or common-sense.

Feeling is the instrument of experience: reason is the guide of life. For the sensibility being exercised by error as well as by truth, it may lead us to vices as well as to virtues; and it cannot afford a rule to be depended on, like the voice of reason, suggested by circumstances relating to the whole of life, or to the general interest of man.

Sentiment, however, is the principle of gallantry:—reason is the principle of love. I mean, that persons distinguished by gallantry, are influenced merely by sentiment; they seek pleasure in any of its forms, and their object is immediate gratification: while those who are united by affection, seek the direction of reason, to guard, multiply, and perpetuate their satisfaction. The distinction of brutes and men, is that of sentiment and reason. Brutes are all sentimental; I mean, that they

they are governed by feeling; or the simple recollection of feeling. Their system is that of gallantry, seeking the repetition of pleasurable sentiment, without provision for the intervals of strong impressions.

That sentiment is not the rule of life in the commerce of men and women, we may presume from observing those who adopt it among the most wretched of mankind. A life consisting of small portions occupied by lively sensations, and great portions occupied by disgust, regret, weariness and apprehension, is extremely miserable. Men and women of gallantry, have never pretended to be happy. The intervals of their pleasurable sensations ;—solitude, reflection and reason ; torture them even in apprehension : yet they necessarily occupy the greater portions of their lives. Their study therefore, is to shorten the intervals of sentiment ; and to vary and multiply the most poignant emotions. The most consummate skill in this matter, will not answer the purpose : for pleasures cloy by frequent repetition ; and strong emotions debilitate constitutions
most

most susceptible of them: they hasten decrepitude and death; objects of perpetual terror to men of sentiment and pleasure.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your most obedient,

And very humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER VI.

MY LORD,

WE have considered the union of man and woman, as intended to be brought on by inclination and choice. Inclination, and the power of chusing, give rise to the affection of love; which is the best and most useful affection in the human mind. But it is with affections, as with the productions of the earth; they cannot be cherished in improper soils. Constitutions of government, and systems of religion, are to principles of morality, what climates are to trees or herbs or flowers; and in the moral as well as the natural world, things alter and even change by a change of circumstances or situations. This we have seen in the kind of history which we have given of the passion of love; or the principle which has united men and women. At one time, it has been, a brutal ap-

petite, consistent with brutal and savage cruelty. At another, it has mounted into the sublimity and madness of romantic adoration; from which it has again fallen into a civilized kind of brutality called gallantry, intrigue, and debauchery. For the difference between a state of savage brutality, and civilized gallantry, is not so great in fact as in appearance. Women are the mere instruments of low and temporary sensuality; they are in common, possessed by as many persons as will flatter or purchase them; and they are slaves nearly alike in both cases: for they hold their influence, their pleasures, and even their support, by the precarious tenure of the caprice of men. The brutes who are not formed into communities, are incapable of all those superior and exquisite pleasures which we denominate reflected; live in that state of promiscuous connection, which may be called a state of gallantry; a just, though a rude representation of a life of pleasure.

Where laws, prejudices, and customs are in opposition to nature, it will seek a kind of indemnification in gallantry, libertinism,

or

or debauchery. Indeed the vices arising in modern governments from the effects of love, seem to be all owing to unnatural or iniquitous customs and laws ; and gallantry and intrigue are the indemnities which men and women reserve to themselves for the injustice or injuries they have received.— Though the idea of being property, or parts of our goods and chattels, be exploded from our philosophy and from some of our laws, it still remains in our prepossessions or customs, counteracted by a little senseless and romantic gallantry. It does not offend a man's conscience ; it is not reprehensible by his parents ; it is not dishonorable ; it is not punishable by law—that he should seduce an unsuspecting, artless, or affectionate girl ; that he should deprive her of that character, without which even he would disesteem or dislike her ; that he should involve her in dishonor and infamy, which no repentance, no good behaviour can remove : while he would be executed, if he forcibly entered her habitation, or took away some paltry parts of her dress or property. The crime is always contrived and committed by
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the man; the punishment and the infamy are borne by the woman. These are the principles of Europe; on these all the nations of it act in respect to women; whatever may be their laws or their religions. We say, truth, justice, and honor, are necessary to the existence of societies, and to the various connections which form them; and we totally banish those virtues, from the first, the most important, and most sacred intercourse of life. Are we to wonder men brought up with such ideas of privilege or license, and secure of impunity, should commit daily outrages on the happiness of the world? Are we to wonder, women degraded from their just or natural equality; deprived of their rights; betrayed by artifice to be consigned to infamy; should, on their part, forget or discard the virtues which they would rejoice to practice in better situations?

In vain do we call the art of false reasoning to our aid, in a warfare against nature. We gravely say, what is called virtue in this case is of much greater importance to women than to men. This is

false? for no possible injury can arise from the vices of women, which do not arise from those of men; nay are occasioned or produced by them. Indeed, since I have attentively and impartially considered the matter, I have felt the warmest indignation, at the abandoned assurance of a man, who pretended to resent the infidelity of his wife, when I have known his conduct to be a series of infamous injuries to her. That has been the case in every instance under my observation. It has been the case in those numerous processes, which have astonished or amused the public; and which have been pursued with the same barbarous iniquitous spirit that pervades the principles of our morals and laws.

But I must not go too far on this branch of the subject. I would have your Lordship observe, I do not intend these general observations as an apology for conjugal infidelity. I account for it; in order to fix your attention on a real and effectual remedy.—I know no offence so great against nature, against God: no crime which indicates a heart so insensible to the strongest
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and most pleasing affections; no disposition so unworthy of all the esteem and confidence which bind us to each other; nor so directly leading to total depravity and wretchedness, as conjugal infidelity. But it must be obvious to every one who is not strangely perverted by vicious customs and laws, that when all truth, honor and justice are abandoned by one party, they must soon be abandoned by the other.

It is time we should turn our views from the errors and vices occasioned by human institutions; to the pleasing and beneficent dispositions of nature. Indeed in this, as in many other cases, the prospects of waste or wretchedness are numerous, those of real beauty or happiness are few, and perceived or relished only by uncorrupted and cultivated minds. Social virtues do not arise immediately from simple sensations or simple ideas; or there would be no difficulty in ascertaining their principles and pointing out their necessity. If a life of social virtue were only a series of detached sensations, the most stupid and wretched mind; so trifling a thing as a

man of pleasure; nay, a brute might perceive its advantages. But when we enter society, our morality becomes a complex science; and our pleasures if we have any, are multiplied by reflection. The difficulty in becoming virtuous and happy as social beings, is exactly the difficulty of rising from the state of brutes to that of men; the difficulty of believing that the pleasures of sense are infinitely enhanced, when united to those of reason.

I know this is aiming too high, for the present morality, or the present philosophy; which is content to snatch its pleasures, because nature will be obeyed; or to abstain from them, because the law, or the devil hold before men the prospect of shame or destruction. Their hearts are therefore alternately occupied by desire and apprehension; by temporary pleasure, which is ever succeeded by terror and remorse. It would be folly to talk to these persons of pleasures they have never tasted; which they consider as ideal; and of which it is hardly possible they should be induced to make trial. A man accustomed to simple
sensations;

sensations; governed wholly by sentiment, or what is called common-sense—hears of reflected pleasures, of the happiness to be procured by reason and the uniform practice of virtue, with the same effect that a brute attends to music, or a bigot to a benevolent description of heaven.

All morality is founded on pleasure. This is a principle, which no species of superstition; no philosophic chicanery, has been able to discredit. All men in all pursuits seek pleasure; this is an invariable and eternal law of nature. On this law variously interpreted, all men, in their senses, are agreed.

This pleasure consists either of simple detached sensations, feelings, or sentiments; without intention, without plan, and without relation to each other:—or it consists of sensations, multiplied by design, by a plan which gives them reciprocal relations; by the constant guidance or direction of reason. Here men are divided. The common votaries of pleasure say, things are to be taken as they may occur; present pleasure is not to be foregone; that happiness depends on the quantity and variety of
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those pleasures, we have the good fortune to seize as their occasions arise; that the interposition of reason is a prejudicial restraint; and that views or considerations extending to the whole of life, or to its moral relations and duties, are inconsistent with enthusiasm, the soul of pleasure, and are never united to that sensibility, without which it can have no existence. This is the creed of the multitude. It is the principle of all the inferior animals: and of that great majority of mankind, who occupy the borders of brutal and rational life. So far it may be said to be natural; as it necessarily arises from the first and general situations of savage or wandering nations. Brutes live promiscuously; because they have not acquired talents and reason to render domestic society, or domestic virtue, the source of pleasure. Savages act in a similar manner for a similar reason. Men and women of gallantry, in all the variations of what is called a state of civilization, adopt the usages of savages and brutes, because they have not sufficient experience and reason to discern, that by adopting the genuine principles

ples and rational regulations of domestic society, they ^sheighten and ^smultiply their pleasures.

They who have studied the laws of nature, not only in the simple propensities by which she first acts, but in those combinations which form social principles; who have felt their pleasures heighten, become more interesting and more numerous as they advanced in paths of virtue; who have found themselves becoming more free by observing the regulations of reason, and more happy by sacrificing present and single pleasures to those which may be at some distance, but of great importance, complicated with gratifications of the most interesting nature:—these persons have ever held the promiscuous commerce of savage brutality, or of civilized gallantry, in abhorrence; and have sought the virtues, as the instruments of pleasure. But their numbers are small; too inconsiderable to furnish examples for general imitation; nay, too inconsiderable to give their experience and principles an air of probability, or a chance of obtaining respect and influence.

ence. Habits formed in ignorant or vicious societies are so prevalent; and examples of men acting on rational and social views are so few, that libertinism triumphs, and reason or virtue put in claims with modesty and reserve.

These claims, however, have been always well supported; they have influenced the principles of the barbarous, as well as licentious forms of governments; they have had the sanctions of all religions; they have checked the profligacy of public manners; they have been avowed and acted upon by the wisest and most excellent persons who have ever appeared in the world.

We need not therefore be afraid of the sarcasms of licentious wit; we need not apprehend being ridiculed as superstitious, if we assert, that love is not designed to be a temporary pastime; or the instrument of gratification merely sensual; but a principle of union in man and woman to continue during life.

Religious legislators have imagined they perceived this truth; and they have enjoined, under the sanction of penalties in
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this world and of damnation in another, that when man and woman are united, they shall never be separated but by one offence. Nothing could have been imagined more effectually to counteract the intentions of marriage, than such a law. Nature plainly intimates, the only method to secure domestic and social happiness, is to form our connections on affection or principle; which, in producing conjugal love, the most sincere and most interesting friendship, the reciprocal and tender attachments of parents and children, brothers and sisters heighen and multiply all our pleasures. If we obey this direction, we are sure to be happy; if we disobey, we have no reason to expect happiness. But nature is not sufficiently wise or prudent, according to the church or the law. They have enjoined, that men and women must continue together; not because they love each other, or are likely to be happy; but because they are *united*; because mystical words have been pronounced over them; and heaven has been supposed to witness their contract.

The very breath of a priest has ever seemed malignant to the happiness of man. This is the triumph of superstitious artifice over reason and the affections of the heart. Nothing has ever been contrived so effectually to oppose the intentions of reason; to destroy the best affections of men; to warp them by authority and interest; or to drive them by despair into all the excesses of prostitution or debauchery as the impolitic, the barbarous custom of forcing those whose folly has made them wretched, to continue wretched to the end of life.

It is a common effect of ignorance or imposture to endeavor or pretend to obtain the ends of nature, by different means from those pointed out by her evident laws.

God has ordered or disposed that man and woman should be united by mutual affection; that the affection should give a charm to all the pleasurable circumstances arising from their union. Here the Almighty hath left us to render ourselves happy; here men should have left us: but avarice and ambition profit by misleading and tormenting us.

The Almighty hath provided, when the first transports from having found another part of ourselves; when the first joys from the discovery of a mind and heart fit to be blended with our own, and worthy of the tenderest love;—when these lively but natural emotions are meliorated into that serene and nameless delight which subsists in minds perfectly satisfied with their union—new relations arise, new affections are produced, and new ties are formed in our hearts, by the birth and education of children. Brutes have not this privilege; nor have savages, or men of pleasure, who live like brutes. They come together by mere appetite; and the fruits of temporary or promiscuous commerce, are regarded without delight; perhaps with corroding doubts, suspicions, or hatred; and are either neglected, or consigned to infamy and vice. But all connections, without that affection, which may be truly and properly called love; whether effected by the authority of parents, by views of interest, or by lust, however sanctified by superstitious or legal forms, are PROSTITUTIONS; offences against nature; and

therefore necessarily productive of misery. The Deity hath provided, when the first enchanting links of mutual affection and parental love have united us; we should be more endeared to each other, by every instance of care and affection in the education of our children. Nothing so effectually charms the mind into a settled esteem, as concurrence in an employment, so beneficent, so delightful, as the care or education of our own offspring. This is a work of so much importance, and requiring so much time, that it contributes more than any thing towards perpetuating our union. The necessary duties to one child are succeeded by the necessary duties to another; until we have transferred, as it were, our whole souls into our offspring; passionately love each other again in our several images or representatives; and live only to make ourselves happy through the happiness of our children. It is thus we may be said to be renewed; or to be made young again. We view the progress of an infant mind; the sources and growth of its affections, with more pleasure than is experienced

enced by itself. We interest ourselves in those great passions which determine the events of life; we forget our infirmities, we imagine ourselves in love again because our children are enamoured; and we become fathers and mothers a second time, when they assume those happy denominations. Compare, if you can, the events of what is called a life of pleasure, with such as these. And when nature is decomposing; when infirmities or disorders menace dissolution—you may see the man who has acted on the selfish and brutal principle of gratifying himself at the expence of truth, honour, and the happiness of others, cursing a world which detests or despises him; deserted by all, by the very instruments of his pleasures, because universally disesteemed; and sinking into the grave in ignominy or frantic wretchedness: while those men and women who have gone hand in hand in the pleasing duties of life, will not only have a firm support in honorable recollections; but will be led down its rugged declivity, by the tenderest care of an affectionate offspring; and will consign themselves

selves to rest, like useful labourers, a little weary, but satisfied with the work of the day.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's,

Most obedient,

And most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LETTER VII.

MY LORD,

ON the subject of love, we have regarded principally the abuses or corruptions of that passion introduced by human religions and laws. It is usual, on the subject, to attempt descriptions, of such a state as might take place, if the dispositions of nature were to have their effect. But as the most beautiful and pleasing descriptions of that kind have ever been attended with little or no moral influence, I thought it might have better effects to point out to your Lordship the origin or causes of the vices and miseries I wish to have removed, than to amuse the fancy with ideal scenes, on which men have no dispositions or capacities to enter. For I look on a person, whose heart has been vitiated, or whose affections have been depraved in
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his intercourse with women, to be as incapable of conceiving any idea of that pleasing principle, which unites and keeps together, during life, affectionate and deserving minds; as a brute is to conceive the satisfaction arising from the truths of mathematics and astronomy, or what is justly denominated scientific pleasure. Give the brute his wretched subsistence, and he thinks of nothing higher: give the sensualist the immediate gratification of the lowest or coarsest appetites, and he will affect to despise satisfactions of the mind, which he has never comprehended, or pleasures of the heart, which he never could have felt.

The difference between the states of men governed by their first sensations, and when governed by combined and reflected sentiments, is so great, that it has given probability and influence to the idea, that man consists of two different beings, a soul and a body. When he is governed by simple or and gross sensations, he is said to consult only the pleasure of the body, or to be directed by that body; when his attention is to more complicated, more exquisite, and internal sensations, he is said to be under the govern-
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ment of the soul. This doctrine has its apparent conveniencies and inconveniencies, which may be very proper subjects of consideration. Our business at present is only to give weight or credit to the distinction we make between simple and complex sensations; between the immediate or gross impressions made on the outward senses, and those made through them on the finer organs of reflection (whatever their names) and thence returned, multiplied, or diffused through the whole human frame. This constitutes precisely the difference between a mere animal, a mere sensualist, and a rational or virtuous man. They are both actuated by sensations. Those of the former are simple, gross, confined to outward senses; they are indulged at random, and have happy or miserable consequences, as may happen: those of the latter are first simple, but natural and just; they are coveted, partly on their own account, but principally on account of those effects produced by combinations of them, or by that power acting on and directing them; which is called reflection. They have, there-

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fore, been among the greatest enemies of mankind, who not only distinguished between the body and the mind, but set them at variance; made the pleasures of sense, and the duties of reason inconsistent. Virtue cannot be better defined, than as the œconomy of our pleasures; the art of improving them; the science of refining, perfecting, and rendering permanent the most voluptuous sensuality. But it is an art; it is a science; and none but adepts possess it. The reason, that men in general grovel in low pleasures, or are strangers to virtue, is ignorance; such as prevents an Indian from sailing in a ship, or measuring his time by a watch.

To those who have had some experience on this subject; who have understanding to make experience furnish data for reason; it will seem probable, the union of man and woman, formed, regulated, and preserved by this voluptuous art, this pleasurable science, which alone deserves the name of virtue—is the best foundation for that social and perfect happiness which all wish for, though but few enjoy.

Mutual

Mutual wants, which may be called mutual defects, produce warm and tender desires : these fixed by taste, imagination and reason, produce passion ; which produces friendship ; which re-produces or re-animates passion to the end of life. This is the marriage of nature ; so wisely provided for ; arranged in causes and effects of so exquisite and delicate a kind, that the interpositions of human art or policy, the interference of law or of religion, have generally had the effects of rude violence and injury. Indeed they must appear to a true philosopher, like the attempts of lions or bears to re-adjust the parts, or to improve the disposition of the human brain.

A declaration of love answered by a declaration or confession of love, is the most solemn, the most sacred, the most binding engagement into which it is possible for a man and woman to enter. It must be understood, the persons making it, pledge their truth and honor, that they are mutually possessed of those desires, or that passion which is the proper principle of lasting

attachment; that they have each found a counterpart for the other; and mean to enter into that tender and affectionate friendship, which is to constitute the great blessing of their lives. Compare the terms and importance of this engagement, with those civil obligations, a failure which subjects a man to punishment, ignominy or death;—compare them with the considerations which determine us to acknowledge moral obligations—and you will perceive that nature holds adultery among the blackest and most enormous crimes. If we think a man an enemy to society, or to be cut off from it, who violates justice in defrauding us of our property, or violently seizing it—what must he deserve who fails in obligations much more sacred, much more important; into which he has openly and deliberately entered; or by artifice deprives another of a blessing, with which the possession of all the riches in the world, can bear no comparison.

But these are imaginary cases. We seldom or never see *real happiness* forfeited by the parties themselves, or broken in upon
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by others. Marriages are generally made by the influence or authority of parents; and their children are only actors who have parts given them, sometimes very difficult to study, to digest, or to perform. The common opinions and laws therefore in regard to adultery, are in a high degree savage and tyrannical. For they suppose those guilty of violating truth honor and justice, who were not at liberty to make engagements; and treat them as worthless or abandoned, for having extinguished affections they were not allowed to cherish, and forfeited happiness they could never have experienced; or of which they had no hope. As it would be unjust to make a performer, who recites a bad part on the theatre, wholly answerable for the faults of the author; so it is savage and cruel to make those young persons who are forced into unhappy marriages, answerable for the consequences of crimes, they would have been very glad not to have committed. Instead therefore of devising laws to render more infamous and wretched the victims of avarice or ambition, wise legislators should have

have had those parents punished, and punished exemplarily, for the incontinency or profligacy of children they had meanly or inhumanly prostituted. How can it be expected, a son or a daughter who is instructed by its family, that all inclinations and all principles must give way to authority or interest, and who is forced or deceived into a disagreeable connection for life; should on a sudden assume all the virtues of a moral character; all the sensibility which is the ground of affection and friendship; or all the truth, fidelity and goodness necessary to act up to its obligations? Indeed young people are seldom brought into this situation without previous opportunities to resist the exercise of such authority; and the common crime of incontinency is not so much in eloping as in marrying. In proportion therefore as they have assented or seemed to assent to the mean or abominable sacrifice; they ought to share in its miserable and infamous consequences.

But under the management of bad parents or avaricious relations, the crimes of incontinency and adultery become probable.

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and necessary *consequences*, not only when young persons are forced to unite themselves contrary to their inclinations; but when to avoid such violence, they are obliged to have recourse to secret correspondences or clandestine marriages. Stolen matches are seldom happy; for very good reasons. The parties have not opportunities to become sufficiently acquainted with each other; their connections are perhaps owing to the dread of being forced into situations they detest, and cemented by resistance or ill-usage. There is a charm to young and generous minds in being fellow-sufferers, which forms an attachment or affection, very easily mistaken for love. All their correspondence and commerce are carried on in that kind of hurry or obscurity, which is ever unfavourable to judgment or choice. We accordingly see men and women hazarding every thing for each other, on a slight secret or stolen acquaintance; and when marriage gives them leisure to behold what they have done; to consider or know each other; they are astonished

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at their folly, and driven by despair into the excesses of profligacy.

Yet the imprudence itself would not be so fatal, if an indifference or disregard to truth, a habit of insincerity, artifice, and intrigue, were not formed by the necessity of secret correspondence. A woman, who will be prevailed upon to deceive her parents, may be prevailed upon to deceive her husband; and a man who takes pains to teach her that art, is destitute of the essential requisites to conjugal happiness: he never can have *her* confidence; he has undermined the foundation of her fidelity, and he has furnished the secret and the inclination to betray him. They who marry by intrigue, often fix the habits of insincerity or artifice so deeply in their minds, that intrigues become necessary; they lose all taste for pleasures, which are the result of natural or honourable affections; and relish none but such as are purchased by some wretched artifice, or snatched from some hazardous and alarming situation.

The art of conducting intrigues, or of hazarding and escaping the dangers attending

ing them, is very similar to the art of war. Both are unnatural in their principles or objects; both consist of stratagems or hazards, which create quick successions of lively sensations; and both have charms to similar minds.

Indeed it is remarkable, the same vitiated taste, and the same mediocrity of genius, which lead to the profession of a soldier, generally seek happiness in the little artifices or perils of intrigue. Women of lively imaginations; with sufficient talents to be vain of them, and unfurnished by education with the essential principles of goodness are dazzled or enamoured of these artificial but brilliant characters; and easily adopt the spirit and artifice, which render them proper counterparts to them.

Here we see vice become an art; and we know there is a kind of gratification in practising any art of which we are in possession. Hence many of those deviations; those adventures apparently capricious, for which it is so difficult to account. It is not uncommon for a man or woman, to hazard

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reputation, peace, or life, for a connection, which is no sooner made, than it loses its charm; and the parties fly to new hazards in pursuit of new objects. We are not to wonder such persons are enraptured during their moments of fondness, at one time with one kind of beauty, at another time with another; at one time smelling to a rose, at another delighted with a poppy: making no distinction between wit and folly; or even between youth and age; but contemplating with equal tenderness and the same temporary suspicious passion, lust lurking in furrows, and the loves or graces sporting in dimples. The pleasure is in the art, in the conduct of the intrigue; not in the object: which, if an angel, must soon be changed for the pleasure of pursuing another. Such persons soon become incapable of love, friendship, or any attachment requiring true or genuine sensibility, natural and lasting affections, sincerity, truth, or fidelity: for the principles of their art, are cunning, falsehood, an insensibility to the sufferings of others, and a disregard to
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the most pleasing and sacred ties which unite the hearts of mankind.

It is extremely unhappy, when interest, ambition, or any other improper motive, induces such persons to marry; unless they should associate like with like: for then they may agree on mutual licence and libertinism; or they may plague and punish each other as they deserve, by mutual suspicion, mutual recrimination, and mutual dishonor.

Pride, vanity, prodigality, and avarice, are common sources of various iniquities; and the common causes of adultery. These, however, are obvious; have been often insisted upon; and we are aware of their danger: but there exists a cause, the danger of which is seldom apprehended; it has the greatest influence in tender and excellent minds; and it promises happiness in all cases with so much plausibility, that it securely leads men in the paths of vice, of hope, of disappointment, and of misery, to the end of life. This is an exquisite extreme sensibility to the minute attentions or inattentions of those we love; and an ex-

pectation of the continuance of those amiable arts which were first made use of to gain our affections. The difference between lovers and husbands; between mistresses, who are candidates for our hearts, and wives who have gained them is the occasion of great unhappiness in marriage, and often leads to the violation of its engagements. Nothing can more effectually mortify a mind of real sensibility, and conscious of its merit, than to perceive itself neglected, because it is possessed; to lose either at once, or gradually, all that tender sollicitude, those passionate attentions, which had been used to get possession of it.

Indeed it shews a shameful, though common weakness, to disregard an object we have taken great pains, and been extremely desirous to obtain, merely because we have obtained it. When possession is not, as it sometimes may be, the occasion of dissipating an illusion, or of unmasking artful and bad minds, the natural consequence is satisfaction, not indifference or disgust.

In nature; in reason; and in all pleasures regulated

regulated by nature and reason, the means are inferior to the end. In the intercourses of men and women, whose passions are natural, or disposed to be the instruments of happiness, the end is more delightful than the means; and the happiness of possession is divested of anxious doubts, is more pure, more satisfactory, than any pleasures which preceded it.

Little minds are incapable of any but little pleasures; and not being able to furnish or to enjoy happiness, they endeavour to substitute a variety of short delights; and, knowing none higher than those of courtship, they seek a repetition of them in intrigue. Hence the deviation and fall of many, who seemed destined for better things. It must be owned, the failure in this case, is generally on the side of men. Women, who are not first prostituted by their parents in what is called the holy state of matrimony, are generally disposed to be affectionate, faithful, and happy: but the common licentiousness of men, destroys all such dispositions, and renders possession the grave of

of love. It is much to the honour of women, that while men are universally abandoned, many of them are virtuous. I speak in the behalf of women; because it is just to be on the side of the oppressed. They generally struggle hard to extend the attentions and tenderness of courtship through the whole of life; and seldom become unfaithful, till after repeated injuries. But when totally disappointed; when outraged in every pleasing hope; and gradually giving way to grief and despair—what an affecting object is an amiable woman thus circumstanced! How very likely to engage the love of a generous man! And if he discovers it, how very likely to give him up a heart which has been cruelly distressed or cast away! What considerations are there to prevent this crime; and who should have the blame of it? *Our* wanton licentiousness and tyranny should have all its infamy and all its misery. Hence the ridicule of those men who are thus dishonoured; and the sneer at the name of cuckold:—this is just; for men are the causes; and women well treated, would hardly ever go astray.

However

However this may be, men and women, when incapable of happiness, or disappointed in their hopes of it, substitute the little temporary pleasures of repeated courtships, and necessarily sacrifice their honor to enter into intrigues. This is the very region of delusion, to such minds as have more imagination than judgment, or more sensibility than understanding. The objects of intrigue, are like fairy forms and unsubstantial shadows. They place themselves always in the most advantageous light, because they have only a temporary appearance to make. They serve to reanimate the hopes of those who have been disappointed in better things; they engage them in the activity of pursuit; they furnish them with the delights of flattery and courtship; and they are no sooner grasped, than they disappear or disgust; while other objects start up, create other hopes, other pleasures, and other disappointments; until the sensibility be worn out, the whole frame exhibit a haggard and cadaverous appearance; until the mind be soured into an ill opinion or hatred

hatred of the world, the most favorable to iniquity, and the most unhappy to it's possessor; until the heart become wholly abandoned and profligate.

What a strong contrast between this, the most favorable, description of what is called a state of pleasure, and that affectionate love, that sincere and tender friendship, to be found only in the connections of sincere and excellent minds; and rendered permanent as our existence by those qualities which occasioned them. What a difference between the silly or artful flatteries of a specious libertine, who may amuse, and dazzle and deceive for a while, but who will not bear inspection; who avoids attachments; and means to sacrifice every thing to his present convenience and gratification, or to the affected caresses of a prostitute, which have been repeated on every dupe who had no discernment and taste to be disgusted with them—what a difference between these and the well-grounded affection, the deserved approbation, and heart-felt attachment of the best and tenderest friends?

What.

What sacrifices therefore are made, what follies committed, by the common pursuits of infidelity and adultery?

I need not point out to your Lordship the consequences of these crimes. At this time, it would be like describing sunshine, or shewing what constitutes day. They all prove the expediency of my application to your Lordship, to exert your interest and influence in the revision and correction of the English laws, respecting the authority of parents, their power of disposing their property, and the various modes by which they may controul or direct the marriages of their children.

At this time, the abuse of parental authority, and of the laws respecting marriage, are the general causes of infidelity to the marriage vow. How that authority may be regulated: or what laws may be substituted for statutes which now dishonour our national character, and banish virtue and happiness from our dwellings, I will not suggest. When your Lordship has induced, what is called the Wisdom of Parliament,

liament, to deliberate on these subjects I may exercise the privilege of a Briton ; and again obtrude some of my opinions on your Lordship.

I am, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient,
And very humble servant,
THE AUTHOR.

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